

# *Meeting Notes*



## *Downtown Action Team*

*August 25, 2005*

*8:00 a.m.*

*Downtown Lincoln Association*

*1200 N Street*

<b><i>Members</i></b>	Jon Camp Lynnie Green Matt Harris (absent) Deb Johnson Jessica Kennedy Dan Massoth (absent) Lori McClurg (absent) Annette McRoy	Sachit Nadkarni (absent) Will Scott Kent Seacrest Nader Sepahpur Mike Sisk (absent) Clay Smith Jason Smith	Cecil Steward Jane Stricker Ed Swotek Becky Van de Bogart (absent) Michelle Waite Jon Weinberg (absent) Terry Werner (absent)
<b><i>Others Present</i></b>	Brenda Bergman Terry Bundy David Cary Jeff Cole Carol Connor Karl Fredrickson	Ann Harrell Mary Johns Lynn Johnson Dallas McGee Polly McMullen	Michael Merwick Kent Morgan Benjamin Morgan Myrna Tewes Michele Abendroth

### **1. Call to Order**

Co-Chair Cecil Steward called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and asked those present to introduce themselves.

Steward drew the group's attention to the revised and edited copy of the Downtown Master Plan report, which will be presented to the Planning Commission and City Council. He noted that the concerns expressed at the last DAT meeting, namely back-in angle parking and parallel access roads along O Street, were added back in to the report.

### **2. Public Comment Period**

Steward asked if there was anyone from the public who would like to make a comment. Seeing no one, he proceeded with the next agenda item.

### **3. Lincoln Parking Services Association**

Polly McMullen began a PowerPoint presentation by stating that a parking study has been done concurrent with the Downtown Master Plan. Downtown Lincoln Association (DLA) feels that this study could have a significant bearing on the ultimate success of the Downtown Master Plan. The consultants for the Downtown Master Plan have identified that additional parking is needed in order to support the implementation of the Plan.

McMullen continued by noting that a consulting firm, Carl Walker, developed a measuring tool

called *20 Characteristics of Effective Parking Systems* that they have used in countless cities across the country. They identify strengths and weaknesses of parking programs that could be called “best in class”. About a year ago, a joint project of the City and DLA began at a cost of \$54,000. The study was conducted by Carl Walker. There was a 15 member task force, comprised of 8 City representatives and 7 community representatives, that led the effort. The study was closely coordinated with the Downtown Master Plan and the Randall Travel marketing study.

The goals of the study are to evaluate the parking system based on Carl Walker’s *20 Characteristics of Effective Parking Systems*; to provide vision, organizational structure, a staffing plan and other practical recommendations to improve effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and customer orientation; and to align the parking organization’s leadership, management and philosophy with downtown and tourism’s strategic goals.

The process was a 90-day study which began last July. There were stakeholder interviews and surveys, peer city comparisons with 7 cities, an evaluation of the system based on the *20 Characteristics* methodology, and a detailed SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis.

In early September, an advisory panel put together by the International Downtown Association (IDA) came to Lincoln and conducted an intense process of reviewing the parking system. They made recommendations in a final report issued in October.

McMullen then reviewed the results of the SWOT analysis. They began their analysis by stating that this is a strong parking system. They identified 18 strengths. There has been a strong investment in parking by the City. The system is financially strong and self-supporting. The parking facilities are clean and well-maintained. The parking supply is adequate overall. They also complimented the recent technology upgrade of the parking equipment.

They identified 7 weaknesses, but they indicated there was one primary weakness, which is the parking organizational structure. The fines and collections reside in the Finance Department. The Police Department handles the parking enforcement. Public Works and Utilities has a big piece of the parking operation, which is divided into two divisions. The Business Office handles all the off-street parking and also manages a contract with Republic Parking. Engineering Services handles the on-street parking. DLA and Haymarket Association represent all the stakeholders, property owners, the University of Nebraska and private garages. DLA’s role is facilitative and supportive. There is also a 30-member parking committee, which has representatives from the City, the Public Building Commission, the State of Nebraska, the federal government and a number of business, property owners and private garages. Its role is facilitating communication, asking for and disseminating information, and giving advice, if warranted.

On August 22, there was a Pre-Council meeting, which focused on parking rates and other issues. The revenue income from meters has been declining over the last three years. One of the City Council members asked what the reason for this is. The Business Office responded that promotional efforts which encourage people to use parking garages is succeeding because people are choosing to park in garages rather than on the streets. The meter revenues fund several

things. The first 25 cents an hour goes straight into the City's general fund. The second 25 cents an hour goes to the parking enterprise fund to help build the funding for new parking. At the time, it was projected that this could generate up to \$800,000 to \$1 million per year for the parking enterprise fund. The fact that the meters are not being used as much could be a concern.

The other weaknesses are the vision and mission, which need to be updated. The collaboration and communication between the parking system and stakeholders also needs improvement.

There were 20 opportunities identified in the analysis. One is that the parking system can be an active partner in economic development. The Downtown Master Plan presents a great opportunity to update parking vision and mission. Republic Parking was selected as the new parking management firm, and they have a great reputation nationally. Another opportunity is the ability to partner with the University, the private sector, and state and federal government to leverage the City's dollars in parking.

There were 9 threats identified. These include a lack of confidence in the parking system management and current priorities; the lack of communication and collaboration between the parking system and community stakeholders; perception of overly aggressive parking enforcement; and a lack of high level parking planning.

Based on this analysis, an IDA parking panel came to Lincoln in September to identify parking organization and management models that have shown demonstrated success in the areas of leadership and government, customer service, being responsive to economic development initiatives, and financial sustainability.

The IDA panel looked at a number of possible models for parking in the future. They looked at status quo, consolidated City management, parking authority, contracting with DLA and privatization. They determined that the parking authority model was the best suited for Lincoln. The second highest was the DLA contract followed by consolidated City management.

They recommended that the organizational structure would be best served by an integrated system with responsibility for all off-street and on-street parking operations, enforcement marketing and planning being done by the City.

The key elements include that the ownership of the system's physical assets shall remain with the City. Care will be taken to ensure strong financial stewardship for the system. The guiding principles include a proposed vision statement and mission statement.

The benefits to the City include a single point of responsibility and accountability; increased parking revenues as a result of increased utilization, management efficiency, and fine collections; increased accountability and customer service as a result of integration of parking functions and Board oversight; potential for integration and coordination with future downtown shuttle and multi-modal strategies; and bringing together all the stakeholders, the City, downtown merchants, property owners, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, DLA, the Chamber of Commerce and private citizens.

McMullen then drew the group's attention to a document that Kent Seacrest helped to create to

“Lincolnize” the Carl Walker study. Seacrest stated that the first three pages of the report are a summary of the conclusions. One of their ideas is that management responsibility will clearly be in the Public Works & Utilities Department. Enforcement could either be in the Police Department or Finance Department. They would create an entity called the Lincoln Parking Services Association, which would be responsible for not only downtown parking but other older urban areas as well. There will be a management contract. They are also envisioning that there will be three different termination abilities. One of the features is that the Public Works and Utilities Director would still have overall responsibility, but they would use the Board to help create best management practices. Republic Parking would be responsible for the new entity. The City would continue to own the garages and meters. There are several models of enforcement that can be chosen. The theory is to address market conditions best. They would like to see it be more responsive. The new Board would set the rates. The question is what the model in the future will be and how to get the mechanism in place for the best tool. Seacrest concluded by identifying a list of potential Board of Director members.

Clay Smith asked if the consultants identified whether the new system would be more financially effective. McMullen stated that over a period of years, it should prove itself to be more efficient and bring in more money. Having an entity that has a sole focus will make it more efficient.

Camp reiterated the fact that we need to have an efficient system. He does not want to see added expense or another layer of bureaucracy.

Swotek stated that it is not only an efficiency concern, but also lost opportunity could cost a lot too. Having an efficient system will make it easier for people to come downtown.

McRoy stated that she is going to present a resolution to the City Council in the next couple weeks to move forward and implement this system.

Seacrest stated that if there was a parking structure that met the needs in the future, that is 100,000 square feet that we do not have to provide on the edge of our community. One of the biggest financial crisis we are facing with infrastructure on the edge is that we do not have road money.

Steward stated that he has a similar concern in that he believes it is a mistake to budget for meter revenue in the general City fund. He feels it is anti-economic development strategy to do that.

Harrell stated that one of the most interesting statements is that cities are in the parking business by accident. That is how you wind up with many different city departments involved in the process. She feels that there will be a lot of interest in pursuing change. Another concern is not to create a new set of bureaucracy. There are also legal questions as to whether it meets the city charter and state constitution.

#### **4. Other Projects and Studies: Status Reports**

McGee stated that they are currently in discussions with the Douglas Theatre Company on the properties that are part of the civic square catalyst project. Appraisals are underway on the properties, which are the basis for discussion on how to assemble the property.

Will Scott stated that the meeting with City officials regarding the redevelopment of the National Arbor Day Foundation Building went well. McMullen thanked Mike Merwick for his work in this process.

Fredrickson stated that the design work process on the Harris Overpass is progressing.

#### **5. Plan Review and Approval Process**

Morgan stated that the draft report of the Downtown Master Plan is available online.

The Planning Commission will hold a hearing on the Downtown Master Plan on Wednesday, August 31. It is anticipated that the Comp Plan amendment will be forwarded to the City Council by the end of September.

On behalf of the DAT, Steward expressed his gratitude to Kent Morgan, Polly McMullen and Dallas McGee as well as the City staff for their work in this process. He feels this process has been very professional and successful.

#### **6. DAT's Participation**

Steward stated that participation by the DAT at the Planning Commission is requested. Their voice and representation of their interest is needed.

Clay Smith thanked DLA and the City for their work and vision on this process, particularly the parking system.

#### **7. Adjourn**

Steward adjourned the meeting at 9:01 a.m.

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